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ABSTRACT

In the 1980's, branch campuses, which may be extension centers of universities or colleges, semi-autonomous residential institutions, two-year public colleges, or parts of multicampus institutions, will need to develop governance structures and processes to enhance their status and improve the quality of education in the communities they serve. Several issues deserve special attention. First, institutional roles and objectives will need to be clarified and branch campuses will need to adopt a community orientation. Second, the governing boards of these institutions will need to make a distinction between being involved in policy formation and in operational issues and better use should be made of advisory committees and board subcommittees. Third, administrative structures should be examined to insure effective coordination, accountability, and equitable representation of all component parts of an institution. Fourth, close attention should be given to systematic faculty development, through study-leave, work experience programs, and more innovative uses of faculty talents. Other faculty concerns that should be considered include extension faculty appointments, personnel recruitment practices, personnel classification, and the effects of unionization. Finally, emphasis should be placed on processes of evaluation and assessment, which will enable the institution to meet accountability demands and evaluate institutional and system outcomes. (HB)

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FULL PARTNER OR STEPCHILD: EXTENDING FUNCTIONS OF A UNIVERSITY THROUGH A BRANCH CAMPUS*

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This paper examines some of the issues facing branch campuses in the governance of higher education in the 1980s. Whatever else college and university governance must focus upon, it seems clear that branch campuses deserve special attention in this decade.

Some Definitions

A branch campus may be an extension center of a college or university offering a narrow range of courses in the evenings and on weekends or it may be a semi-autonomous residential institution of a special purpose or comprehensive nature. In some states, the two-year public colleges are extension centers or branch campuses of the public university. In others, branch campuses exist as parallel or equal partners in a system of multi-campus institutions.

A branch campus, of whatever description, operates as an integral part of a parent institution or larger system. Its governance structure includes at least one additional layer of internal decision-making, and its educational activities are at least one step further removed than they are in single campus institutions from the center of public authority. Both its governance structures and processes deserve careful examination.

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Roles and Goals

The roles and goals of an institution establish its identity and activities. A role or mission statement should convey the overall purpose or function of an institution. Institutional goals more specifically provide the direction for the development of educational programs and services. Although roles are more stable, both roles and goals may be subject to change over time.

What has happened to the roles of branch campuses over the past decade? There is a tendency for institutions to become "all things to all people" and thereby to distort their roles. Such a tendency is particularly strong in the absence of role clarity or an effective mechanism for coordination within a system. Role distortion may also result in inter-institutional conflict over students and resources. This is particularly evident in a time of student decline and fiscal constraints.

Irrespective of the arrangement for governance, it seems that the concern over external control has increased. In the absence of voluntary cooperation, matters of articulation and coordination among institutions or campus centers are regulated by state legislation. In some instances, unfortunately, such policy directives are received as pronouncements rather than as positions resulting from consultative forums.

Another concern related to the rise of branch campuses and institutional centers is the complex issue of prestige. There are those among us who have differing perceptions of the relative worth of branch campuses and education at university centers that could easily

lead to a view that one is more "noble" than the other. Leland Medsker found that institutions tend to submit to a "pecking order," over time trying to emulate those they perceive as being higher in the order. Although branch campuses frequently must struggle for parity of esteem because of their separateness, once their role has been clarified their status should be secure as full members in a system. Branch campuses should emulate greatness and achieve distinction in their own sphere, and not struggle to become something for which they were never established.

Goals follow from institutional mission; they operationalize the purpose of an institution. Goals can provide direction to the development of programs and services, but they also can serve as the basis for institutional planning and evaluation. No institution should neglect to review and evaluate its goals periodically. Such an activity, involving all major sectors of an institition, can assist in identifying new directions and in establishing priorities among activities.

Has the time come for branch campuses to redefine their roles and goals. As the environmental context and the educational needs in society change, so also must the institution. For example, it seems incumbent upon "branch campuses" to adopt more clearly a community orientation. Among educational institutions, these are the centers that should serve most directly the needs of the wider community. Indeed, a community orientation could include active involvement in community development activities that go far beyond the educational offerings of traditional schooling. Community involvement should be

viewed as an integral part of an institution, not as some kind of "extension" activity.

Governing Board

In American higher education, ultimate institutional authority rests with lay boards of trustees. Appointed or elected, public trustees hold the college or university "in trust"; they establish institutional policies and administrative regulations.

Historically, trustees have struggled with the distinction between policy formulation and operational issues. Such a distinction may be more difficult to maintain for a single campus board than for a multi-campus board. In a single campus board, all issues center upon one institution -- its administration, faculty, programs, students, physical facilities and budget, but a multi-campus board cannot afford the temptation to meddle in the operational affairs of each of its campuses. Consequently, the primary emphasis of a multi-campus board will more likely be upon policy formulation than upon operational matters at an institutional level. To the extent that a branch campus is removed from the interference of its board in operational matters, to that extent it can look for a greater contribution from its board in establishing broad institutional policies and overall administrative regulations.

Perhaps the record of multi-campus boards has fallen short of this ideal. In some instances, at least, multi-campus boards also struggle unsuccessfully with their roles and devote inordinate attention to operational matters. Often when this happens, their concerns focus upon the affairs of the main campus or the "flagship" institution within

the system. Branch campuses do not receive appropriate attention by such boards; they are treated as ancillary parts of the total institution. When board membership includes institutional representation, as in some Canadian colleges, such representation is usually drawn from the main campus, not from the branch campus.

How boards can serve their total institutions more effectively remains a continuing challenge. Some multi-campus boards have appointed local advisory committees for their branch campuses; others have established a sub-committee of the board to visit the branch campus periodically. Such provisions could improve the level of awareness among board members for the branch campus, but they do not ensure equitable treatment. Perhaps the most important way to increase the effectiveness of a multi-campus board lies in an insistence upon role clarification. Institutional policies and administrative regulations can be designed for a total institution, including the branch campus.

Administration

Branch campuses emerged in several states as extension centers for university education. Administrative responsibility for such ventures were often assumed by the extension division of a university. In some instances, the offerings in the center were coordainted by a faculty member who reported to the director of the extension division on the main campus. The director, later a dean, reported to a vice-president of the university. Although a university might have a number of such centers, they were rarely seen as integral parts of the institution. If advisory committees were established for branch campuses, their concerns were largely with community liaison and program validation.

Today's branch campus has its own director, often called a president, who serves as the chief campus administrator. Whether he serves effectively as a campus president relates directly to several structural issues.

A multi-campus institution must provide for a system-wide administrative structure. The chancellor or president with his central office staff faces an increasingly complex environment. As an educational statesman, the system executive embodies the traditional symbolic authority of the institution, particularly in its public functions. In public relations and specifically in governmental inter-actions, the institution's interests are best served through a unitary approach. To separate the chief executive from the special interests of the main campus, it has been found helpful to locate the central administrative offices in separate facilities. Equitable representation of all parts of the institution must be provided; the central administration must also be <u>seen</u> to be equitable in its activities.

The president of the branch campus should serve as a member of the highest administrative council of the institution. Overall institutional coordination can be achieved at this level. Careful deliniation of authority for the branch campus president will avoid undue stress and ambiguity in institutional governance. If central office staff provide information and support services for campus administrators, the individual campuses can function as semi-autonomous units. In a fully integrated system, operational accountability should be exercised at the campus level. Branch campuses cannot be administered effectively from a central office; they must have sufficient authority to manage their own internal affairs.

Faculty

As colleges and universities established extension centers and branch campuses, they appointed faculty to teach courses that often used the same texts as those used on the main campus. Extension faculty were often approved by departmental units of the main campus. Usually they were placed in the university rank structure, but frequently at lower levels of rank and salary. Branch campuses also engaged proportionately more part-time faculty than did the main campus.

In the expansionist years, recruitment of personnel was a major challenge. Where could administrators, faculty members and support staff be found with an approximate mix of formal training and work experience? Although not every appointment met the desired expectations, institutions were remarkably successful in their staffing. But in the 1980s, there will be few opportunities to engage new staff members. Low mobility and an aging staff portends an entirely new challenge for post-secondary institutions. Whereas professional development may at one time have been seen as a matter of personal interest, today it must be regarded as an institutional imperative. Staffing inflexibilities may readily lead to loss of vitality and diminished creativity in performing general role expectations, but they may result in blockage and severe morale problems in the face of new challenges. An institution that seeks to re-define its goals and serve a new clientele must give high priority to the systematic development of its personnel. In addition to formal study-leave and work-experience programs, new alternatives must be found for staff members to engage in continuous upgrading and life-long learning activities. Of course, such activities require allocations of time and financial resources.

Another issue facing nonuniversity postsecondary institutions lies in the classification of personnel. Too many institutions have adopted the traditional model of separating professional from non-professional staff. New roles can be established to increase greatly the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Just as the 1980s challenge us to meet the educational needs of a very diverse clientele, so they also challenge us to establish multiple instructional and service roles. Greater efforts should also be made to provide for secondments, joint appointments, short-term and brokerage arrangements to deploy staff more imaginatively and productively.

The unionization of staff members is so well established in postsecondary education that to comment on it may be misunderstood. It seems that the notion of a multiplicity of staff roles may be somewhat antithetical to a reliance upon bargaining units in defining working conditions and staff relations. Indeed, participation in instititional governance also creates anomalies for staff members as well as students. Can we still achieve a sense of collegiality and partnership in the context of an adversary model of institutional governance? Perhaps future developments in staffing will maximize the professional qualities in the educational enterprise.

Evaluation

A final institutional factor that deserves mention in this paper concerns itself with accountability and evaluation. Perhaps as never before in the recent history of higher education, we hear a call for accountability. What is the impact of branch campuses? What effect do the educational experiences have upon the student? How readily can

students move into the job market or transfer to another postsecondary institution, and with what success? What image does society have of branch campus education and how accurately does it reflect its goals?

There have been a variety of approaches taken to assess institutional and system outcomes. Indeed, personnel evaluations have also resulted from the emphasis upon accountability. Recent developments include the use of "educational audits," self-studies and external team evaluations. Assessment in education has always been difficult, but to evaluate the impact of new delivery systems, especially with a new breed of students, is at once complex and exciting. Careful monitoring and scrutiny should accompany new developments in postsecondary education.

Conclusion

Branch campuses no longer stand apart in the governance of higher education. State and national organizations may not yet provide the kind of assistance to them that they deserve, but recent developments indicate clearly that branch campuses have come of age. They belong in the mainstream of academic developments in the 1980s. Along with mergers, consortia and other cooperative arrangements, they can best be understood as integral parts of multi-campus systems. Governance structures and processes can be developed to enhance the status of branch campuses and to improve the quality of education in the communities they serve.

Branch campuses have a great future; they can play an integral part in promoting "intentional" change in higher education in the 1980s.

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